

# SHARECROPPERS' VOICE

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SOUTHERN TENANT FARMERS' UNION

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## SAM BENNETT FREE! ILLINOIS GOVERNOR STOPS EXTRADITION

Aug. 29th.

Springfield, Ill. — Governor Henry Horner announced his refusal to authorize extradition to Arkansas of Sam Bennett, 52-year-old Negro Union member whose return to St. Francis County had been demanded by the state of Arkansas.

Bennet had been charged with assault with intent to kill following an argument with J. K. Shafer, plantation owner near Widener, Ark. Shafer attempted to force Bennet to return to the fields while the recent cotton choppers' strike was on. Bennet, a loyal union member, refused to scab, and fled to Chicago where he sought refuge with relatives when Shafer threatened his life.

One of Bennet's letters back home to his family was intercepted and his whereabouts made known. A warrant was issued and Deputy Sheriff Lawrence Rhea and Prosecuting Attorney A. M. Bradford of St. Francis County were sent along with the paper signed by Governor Futrell of Arkansas to return the fugitive to Arkansas.

### Workers' Defense League

Officials of the Union notified the Workers' Defense League in Chicago. Attorneys were sent to Springfield, the state capital, and a hearing was granted on the case. Bradford and Rhea returned to Arkansas in time to participate in the mobbing of Clay East and D. M. Moody, Little Rock lawyer who defended Dave Benson at the Kangaroo Court of Forrest City, but they failed to bring Bennett back.

The hearing was held on July 14th, with H. L. Mitchell, Union Secretary and Claude Williams, flogging victim, present to testify on behalf of Sam Bennett. Bradford also returned for the hearing.

### Planters Lawyer Testifies

Mitchell and Williams gave their testimony of the recent terror and mob rule in Eastern Arkansas, and A. M. Bradford, planters' lawyer, unctuously boasted of the exploits of his fellow mobsters. Some of his interesting statements went into the record and no doubt were influential in obtaining the release of Bennet.

Governor Horner refused to send Sam Bennet back to Arkansas, and was quoted as saying that he was freeing the man because of possible ill treatment he would receive in the Arkansas courts.

To the Chicago Workers' Defense League, Miss Lydia Liddell, secretary, its able attorneys, Albert Goldman, Meyer Myer and others go the thanks of the thousands of members of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. These friends aroused hundreds of organizations and individuals thruout America who thru protests, petitions, letters and interviews, saved Sam Bennet from being returned to face lynching or slow death on an Arkansas prison farm.

## FLASH!

The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, in a telegram to Washington protested the threat to force relief workers on WPA projects into Arkansas and Mississippi cotton fields, as an effort on part of planters and the Chamber of Commerce to beat down wages and end the picking season early. Plenty of labor is available where fair prices prevail, the telegram stated.

## NEW BENSON TRIAL SEPT. 14

Forrest City, Ark.—Dave Benson, organizer for the Workers' Alliance of America, who was sent by his organization to aid in the recent strike and was "Kangarooed" in the Court of Justice of the Peace McCutcheon at Forrest City, is scheduled to be tried on appeal before the St. Francis County Circuit Court here September 14th.

Union leaders of St. Francis County are urging that every union member in St. Francis and nearby sections be present in court on the day Dave Benson goes to trial. Members of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union are determined that there shall be no such disturbances as were witnessed here at the time of the "Kangaroo" trial of Dave Benson, June 5th, when the lawyer who appeared for Benson and his driver, a former Union official were mobbed by planters and officers and many visitors jailed.

The presence of large numbers of white union members will discourage any such demonstrations, and if sufficient mass pressure is shown, a handpicked jury of planters won't so readily convict an innocent man.

## March of Time Film Shows Union Strike

Millions of people who have never seen sharecroppers or heard of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union are now seeing in the moving pictures all over the nation "King Cotton's Slaves." This picture shows in a fair and exciting way union meetings, being addressed by leaders of the Union such as W. L. Blackstone, A. D. Emerson and others. It shows the eviction of a large group of union families, and marching of the long picket line in the recent cotton pickers strike as re-enacted by people of St. Francis and Cross Counties who were in the original "Union Marches."

There is a good picture of the planters armed with clubs and guns riding in the automobiles over the country side trying to prevent the union men from striking. Scenes are shown featuring Rev. Claud Williams and Willie Sue Blagden who were beaten up near Earle when they attempted

## U. S. PROBES ARK. PEONAGE

Constant protests on the part of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and its hundreds of thousands of friends and supporters thruout the nation have finally forced the United States Government and the Roosevelt administration to take some definite action to protect the rights of sharecroppers, tenants and other farm labor in Eastern Arkansas.

The Federal Grand Jury will take up possible violations of United States laws when it meets in Little Rock, Arkansas, September 21. Mr. George P. Jones, special prosecutor, has been appointed to prosecute violators of the law.

The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union has already placed in the hands of officials of the Department of Justice a number of cases and is busily engaged in collecting statements from members. Affidavits on every possible violation of Federal law are being taken by attorneys for the Union. Especial attention is being given to the cases involving interference with the United States mail.

J. R. Butler, President of the Union, in a statement issued at Memphis said, "In the United States Courts a poor white man's or Negro's testimony is supposed to be as good as any other person's. Any union member called to testify before the Federal Courts must be guaranteed protection of the United States Government, and if any harm comes to any of our members of their families as a result of such testimony, the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union is going to know the reason why."

## EARLE FLOGGERS SUED IN U. S. COURT

### PLANTERS NAMED BY VICTIMS



WILLIE SUE BLAGDEN

Jonesboro, Ark. — Three suits were filed here on August 29, in the Eastern District Court of the United States against "Boss" John Dulaney, Dr. H. S. Watson, L. L. Barham, Ernest Richards, Earl Cherry, Percy Magness and Tommie Thompson, Crittenden County planters and riding bosses, who are being sued for their participation in the recent floggings in Earle, Ark. on June 15th.

The suits were filed by Attorneys for the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, Newell Fowler of Memphis and C. A. Stanfield of Hot Springs, Ark. They are on behalf of Willie Sue Blagden, Eliza Nolden and J. M. Reese, victims of flogging during the cotton choppers' strike. Reverend Claude Williams, Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers, who was also flogged, was unable to file suit in United States Court as he is a resident of Arkansas. The others lived in either Tennessee or Mississippi.

### \$15,000 Damages Asked

Asking \$5,000 actual and \$10,000 punitive damages, each person named in their suits the planters and bosses who are guilty of assaulting them.

Eliza Nolden, 60-year-old Negro Union woman, charges that she was picked up on the streets of Earle by Dr. Watson, Dulaney, Magness and Garham and carried to a nearby cotton gin and there beaten with clubs the size of ax handles. This followed the breaking up of the picket line near Earle earlier in the day when J. M. Reese, 60-year-old white Union member, was accorded similar treatment and given until sundown to leave the state.

### Weems Still Missing

Among the others beaten by the same gang of floggers was Frank Weems who was left for dead in a field. His body disappeared, and in spite of statements by Howard Curlin, Crittenden County Sheriff, nearly sixty days ago that Weems would be produced in 48 hours, no trace of him has been found. Local Union members believe that the body of Weems was thrown into a nearby river or lake.

Weems was reported dead, and union leaders planned a mass protest funeral. Rev. Claude Williams, who had handled other workers' funerals, was asked to take charge of arrangements. The body had disappeared. Rev. Williams, accompanied by Miss Blagden, went to Earle to find out whether or not Frank Weems was still alive. They were met on one of the main streets of Earle by

## SPANISH WORKERS BATTLE FASCISTS

The most bloody war in history is raging in Spain. The workers are fighting for the right to an existence. A short time ago a government of the people was elected. Workers in labor unions, political parties and other groups combined into the popular front, and succeeded in electing all of the officials.

The landowning class, the capitalists, the rich who were still in control of the army revolted. It is a war of the rich against the poor, no quarter is being given or asked. Towns are bombarded, women and children are being killed daily. The loyalist workers are struggling heroically, women fighting beside the men, all are on the firing line.

The whole world is threatened with war. France, one of the countries with a government similar to the Workers Government in Spain, sympathizes with the government. Germany and Italy, the strongholds of bloody fascism, are supporting the Rebels. American Labor Unions are raising 1,000,000 dollars to send the Spanish workers to help them defeat the Fascist Rebels. Russian workers sent \$2,000,000. French workers send men as well as money to help defend the workers' cause.

We may know soon what the outcome will be. If the workers lose today, they will win tomorrow; and it is better that many have gone down fighting than to have submitted to slow starvation for all.

JOIN THE SOUTHERN  
TENANT FARMERS' UNION

(Continued on Page 2)



## NATIONAL OFFICE NOTES

By H. L. MITCHELL

**C**OTTON picking is now in full swing thruout union territory. Reports coming into the office state that the lowest price being offered is seventy-five cents per hundred, the highest one dollar per hundred. Most of our people feel that in as much as cotton is worth over 12c per pound, picking should be \$1.00 per hundred or over.

The Union is concerned that a fair and reasonable price be paid thruout its territory. We want to know what is being paid in your community. Locals should have the Wage and Contract Committees look into this and report to headquarters by letter what is being offered, and what the members of the Union consider they should be paid.

No strikes of cotton pickers should be undertaken by any local until authorized to do so. Members of the Union, much less the union officials, do not want strikes that are unnecessary. We all know that a strike is a bitter struggle between two classes, and entails hardship and suffering on our part and a loss of profit to the owners and bosses. We prefer arbitration of wage disputes, but the planter class seems incapable of forming any organization which might function in civilized society. Their only answer to our former pleas for arbitration of disputes has been mob rule.

The Union stands for law and order, and stakes its future on the justice of its cause, however, we can and will demonstrate our power by striking as a last resort.

### Pay Your Dues

One of the weakest links in the chain of Union organization is its lack of financial support by the members. We have a tremendous organization, and one that is growing fast. Over 30,000 sharecroppers, tenants and other farm laborers are now enrolled in the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Of this large number only an average of 2600 members were dues payers during the period of the first six months of 1936 (based on 3c per month per capita tax paid into national office). Conditions over which our people have no control have made dues payments almost impossible even tho they are only 10c per month.

### Crops Good

The crops in this section are exceptionally good this year (except in Oklahoma), and with the let-up on the restriction of cotton acreage our people should have more money than they have had for the past two years. From all indication the price of cotton will be 12c and above.

All of our local, county and state officials should immediately start a campaign to collect dues for one year in advance from each member. Small amounts should be paid each week or month until the full amount is paid. Given sufficient money upon which to operate the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union can really become a powerful force.

We will become that powerful force when we, as an organization, are able to stand upon our own feet and do not have to depend on outside aid in every

## COUNTY CENTRAL COUNCIL SET UP

August 1st found over 300 union members enjoying fried fish at Antioch, Arkansas, where a meeting was held to set up the Cross County Central Council.

Mr. J. R. Butler, National President of the Union, spoke, stressing the necessity for active county organizations. Due to the small number of locals represented, a temporary council was elected to hold office until another meeting is held on Sept. 16th when a permanent council will be set up.

## PLANTERS SUED

(Continued from Page 1)

their assailants and taken out to Highway 75 and there beaten with a wide leather harness strap. Both were badly injured.

All of the planters named as floggers have denied participating in the flogging, but Union attorneys have been working on the case for some time and are sure of their men. Others may be named later as evidence develops on these and other cases. All persons having knowledge of these and similar cases are requested to get in touch with the Union attorneys, as other suits for conspiracy, etc., may be instituted.

crisis that arises. We are asking every member and every local to give attention to this important Union business at once.

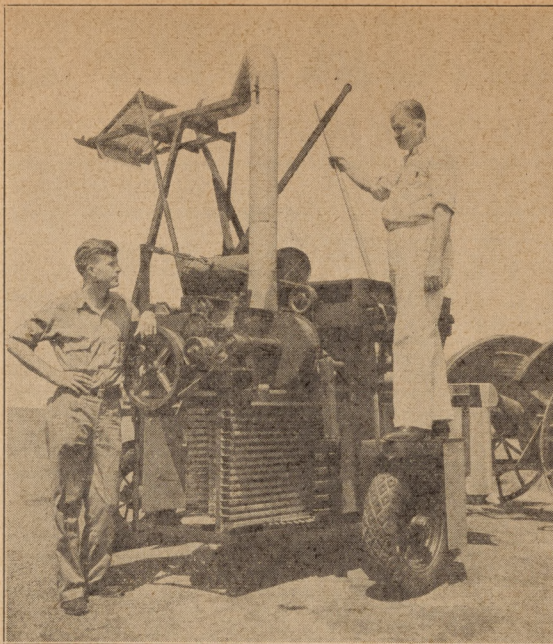
### Defense Committee

Each local should see to it that three of their most capable members are elected as a Defense Committee and see that this Committee functions. One of these members should be defense secretary, and his duty will be to attend to correspondence concerning legal matters, etc. Members of the local having legal questions should see this committee and place their cases before it, giving all information, documents, letters, etc., so that the cases can be thoroughly investigated and the material sent into headquarters where lawyers can examine the case. Suits to protect the rights of our people will be filed in every clear-cut case involving an injustice. A group of lawyers has already been retained to handle legal defense matters. The General Counsel for the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union is Judge A. B. Pittman, noted Memphis attorney who served for 30 years as a judge in Tennessee.

Again, the need to make this service really useful is money. A number of the locals have already planned to assess each member \$1.00 for legal defense. If this is done thruout the Union, then sufficient money will be raised to secure justice and to throw fear into the hearts of the wrongdoers.

All such funds collected should be sent into the Treasury of the Central Defense Committee, Box 5215, Memphis, Tenn.

We are indebted to Brookwood Labor College for the pamphlet from which this and future articles are taken and revised to suit our needs.



## The Rust Brothers Cotton Picker

For many years inventors have been trying to make a mechanical cotton picker that really works. Ever since cotton became the big Southern crop, many kinds of cotton-pickers have been tried out and have failed. Just to show how much time and trouble has been put in on it, there are nearly a hundred patents already granted on just one type of cotton-picker. And there are many types of cotton pickers.

Cotton picking has always been done by hand, because that was the cheapest way. All the machines that were invented were more costly to own and run than hand labor. One of the main reasons for the failure to make a practical cotton picker was the low wages paid to tenant farmers; with labor so cheap there was not much reason to find another way to pick cotton. (This is also true of other parts of the world like India and China. Labor is dirt cheap, so there is very little labor-saving machinery.)

### Two Kinds of Pickers

There are two main types of mechanical cotton pickers: the claw type and the revolving spindle type. The first of these, the claw type, is just a mechanical hand, which picks the cotton like the human hand. The cotton is taken to the sack by suction. A picker of this type is no advantage over hand picking, because it takes about as much time to put the mechanical hand or claw on the cotton boll as it does to pick it with a human hand. Besides, it usually takes a mule or a couple of men to pull the machine. When the cost of the machine is added, it is easy to see why the claw type is almost useless, costing much more than hand picking.

The Rust Cotton Picker is of the second type, the revolving spindle type. This kind of cotton picker has a number of spindles from four to eight inches long that wrap the cotton up on them. Some machines have rough spindles with grooves or spirals

on them, while others are smooth. On all of these machines there are several hundred or a thousand or more spindles on a spindle belt or drum. Some of these spindles hit the cotton while others may not. They are placed so close together that almost all the cotton gets touched by one or the other of the spindles.

When one of these spindles touches an open boll of cotton, the turning spindle wraps up the cotton on it. To test this yourself, take a stiff piece of wire and wet it with your tongue. Then take a boll of seed cotton and lay the spindle on it. Then turn the wire and watch it wrap up the cotton around itself.

### Does Not Harm Plant

Now the first thing that everybody wants to know is whether the spindle kind of cotton picker hurts the plant or the leaves or the bolls which are not open yet. It doesn't hurt any of these, for a reason that is not hard to understand. Have you ever seen a Caterpillar tractor going along the road? If you have, you have noticed that the tracks don't tear up the road, because the tractor lays the track down and then rolls over it while the track stays in the same place on the ground. The Rust picker has a big belt about two and a half feet tall, with spindles sticking out from the belt. It is just like a caterpillar tractor turned on its side, with the track going around the machine instead of over and under.

This belt goes back at the same speed as the machine goes forward, so the spindles do not rake through the cotton at all. In the Rust cotton picker there are 1344 spindles. The plant goes through a groove in the front of the machine, and comes in contact with these spindles. On the other side of the spindle belt there are some rubber strips which moisten the spindles, and also a roughener which keeps the spindles from getting too slick.

After the spindles have picked the cotton, they come to a set of "stripper bars," which take the cotton off the spindles. Then the cotton is blown by means of a fan to a large sack hanging on one side of the machine, which holds about two hundred pounds. As soon as this sack is full, it is dropped and another empty one put in its place. The picker is pulled by a tractor, which also supplies power for the fan and for turning the spindles.

### 9000 Lbs. in 7½ Hours

The best record that the picker has ever made is 8000 pounds of seed cotton in 7½ hours. However, as there will be numerous tests this year, this record may be broken. The present model picks only one row at a time, but it is entirely possible to double the output by making a two row machine.

It is obvious that a machine like this can cause a lot of suffering in the South. The dispossessed and disinherited of the South are very fortunate in having two men like John and Mack Rust, who are greatly concerned with the possible misery that the picker may create. They intend to use as much as possible of their revenue to help the people that are thrown out of work by their machine. But more important, they want to use some of their money to make this world a better place for the workers to live in. Unemployment today is caused by the way machines are owned and run; they are run for profit, and not to establish the best possible living for the people of this country.

The most important thing that the machine will do is to take the back-breaking toil out of cotton picking. By doing so, it will help to break down the plantation system, which has for too long a time made the South a place of rich crops and hungry people. With the breakdown of the plantation, we will come much closer to realizing that the only hope for the Southern agricultural worker, whether black or white, whether a sharecropper or not, is to combine with the workers in the mills, mines, and factories, and fight for that plentiful life which he deserves.

## REVOLT among the SHARE- CROPPERS

By

HOWARD KESTER

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The  
Sharecroppers'  
Voice

BOX 5215 MEMPHIS, TENN.



## NEWCASTLE HAS UNION MEETING

On August 29 hundreds of people attended a big rally at Newcastle, Ark., on the very spot where Gov. Futrell's National Guardsmen set up their machine guns during the cotton choppers' strike.

The rally was addressed by J. R. Butler, Union President, Rev. Claude Williams, victim of the Earle, Ark. floggers, Myles Horton, Director of Highlander Folk School and Rev. Joseph Novak of Baltimore, Maryland. Rev. Novak is a visitor in this section, and has been doing organizational work for John L. Lewis' Committee for Industrial Organization in the steel mills of the East.

Barbecued fish and other good things to eat were free to all. The gathering was arranged by a committee under the chairmanship of Tony Petersen of Ed Hill Local.

## A. F. OF L. SUSPENDS 1,000,000 MEMBERS

Ten labor unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor were suspended by the recent session of the Federation's Executive Council. These Unions make up the Committee for Industrial Organization which is headed by John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers of America.

The membership in these unions constitute one-third of the membership in the American Federation of Labor, having over a million members. The Mine Workers alone constitute an approximate half million.

They were suspended due to their belief in industrial organization. In other words they believe that all workers in the same industry should belong to one great union. The opposition group, the craft unionists, believe that workers in the same industry should be organized into a number of unions according to the type of work that they do.

The C. I. O. is now engaged in an organizing campaign to organize the half million workers in the steel plants of America.

## UNION ORGANIZED IN MISSOURI

Fourteen new locals of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union have been organized in Missouri recently. Nearly every night trucks loaded with Union members and organizers make some schoolhouse and set up a new local.

C. C. Kirkpatrick, former UMWA member, is one of the most active organizers in the state. John Allen and John Handcox, well known union organizers, have been setting up locals in the state for some time.

## 10,000 STRIKE IN MEXICO

Terreon, Coahuila State, Mexico.—10,000 workers on cotton plantations in Coahuila and Durango states struck August 10 for increased wages and guaranteed employment thruout the entire year. The strike was called as planters prepared for the picking season.



**DROUGHT**—Day after day the weather report has been "fair and warmer," through the West and Midwest, and the land has become parched and dry with

crops blasted by the sun. Here is a family from Oklahoma, whose farm has been destroyed by drought, dust and erosion, seeking a new homestead in

San Fernando Valley, Cal. More than 32,000 persons have emigrated from 19 drought States to California alone.

## OKLAHOMA NOTES

By ODIS L. SWEEDEN,  
State Secretary, Okla. S. T. F. U.

The Oklahoma "30,000 membership drive" is in full swing. The nearer we approach the deadline the harder the field force works. We are tightening up our battle lines and gathering new recruits. Through our organization "the wooden shoes go up the ladder while you hear the steady thud of polished boots descending."

New locals are being organized in Oklahoma County by Brother Unger of Luther. This is the county where the State Capital is located. We want to go from there to Lyon County. We have confidence that Brother Unger can do the work. A few more months of hard work by loyal members of Oklahoma and the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union will be organized in every community of the state. We will prove to the world that the sharecroppers, tenant farmers, farm hands, of all races can organize together, and work out their problems.

### Rally Held

Down in Southeast Oklahoma Don Brown and Drew Morton are digging in. They expect to put S. E. Oklahoma on the map within the next month. There is plenty material there, and they certainly need a live Union.

The all-day rally held at Hanes by the Wagoner County S. T. F. U. was a huge success from every angle. Some 300 people, white and colored, attended. Several able speakers were present, including J. R. Butler, National President, John Denny, organizer; Edwin Mitchell of the National Office. The business session of the County Central Council was held and steps taken to further the fight for the franchise, to secure more representation on the WPA work, for the starting of a road project in Wagoner County, and to further the organization of agricultural workers.

Under the leadership of Rev. Purcell and Bob Winstead, Wagoner County is fast coming to the

front as a model in organized counties. The white workers are becoming interested, and we predict that before the first of the year Wagoner County will be organized 100%, proving that white and colored workers can unite and work together in harmony.

Drew Morton, State President, spent a few days at state headquarters. He was here to attend the rally at Hanes.

### Indian Pow-Wow

Plans are under way for a big barbecue and pow wow in October at which time the national secretary of the S. T. F. U. will be expected to smoke the peace pipe with the Indians and join the stomp dance.

All members of the union who are in the drouth area of Oklahoma and who have not received their drouth relief application or cannot get one, please get in touch with the state headquarters. We have a drouth relief program which we hope to get over. With the shortage of crops it is going to take something besides politics and "hot air" to get thru the winter. Several organized counties and locals are already working on this.

Rev. W. M. Stephens is making a speaking tour of Muskogee and McIntosh counties. Be sure to hear him when he is in your vicinity.

There will be an all-day meeting on Labor Day September 7th at Slick, Creek County, Okla. The Creek County Central Council will be set up on this occasion. Creek has the reputation of being a progressive county, and under the leadership of such able leaders as Rev. McGoon and John Denny, will no doubt show the Southwest a few things about organization. The State Executive Committee will also meet at this time.

### UNION PICNIC

A picnic and two-day union gathering was held in Altheimer, Ark., Aug. 23rd, and 24th, when Union members from Jefferson County Locals gathered to celebrate the first year of Unionism in this county. Leon Turner, efficient secretary of Jefferson County, headed the Arrangements Committee.

## WHERE IS FRANK WEEMS?

Sheriff Howard Curlin says he knows that Frank Weems is alive. If he knows this, then why doesn't he say where Frank Weems is? Why doesn't he produce Frank Weems?

Is Sheriff Curlin lying? Is Frank Weems already in an unmarked grave or at the bottom of the St. Francis River? Or is Sheriff Curlin waiting until Frank Weems recovers from the vicious beating he got from the planters before producing him?

WHERE IS FRANK WEEMS,  
SHERIFF CURLIN?

## ORGANIZERS HAVE NARROW ESCAPE

Two organizers for the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union had a narrow escape from severe injury or death a short time ago when they were fired on by unknown persons.

They were driving along a narrow dirt road when the road was suddenly blocked by two cars which formed a V across it. Two men from the parked cars ordered them to unload. Knowing the treatment that they could expect, the union men quickly knelt on the running board behind the fenders and exchanged some nineteen shots with the men from the parked cars, who quickly drove off. The car driven by the union organizers had three bullet holes in the windshield.

The Sheriff of that county promised that such things would not be allowed to happen again. In spite of the sheriff's promise, however, it is reported that the planters have threatened to dynamite the place where union meetings are held.

JOIN THE SOUTHERN  
TENANT FARMERS' UNION

## DROUGHT NEWS

### LUBBOCK TEXAS

Crops in West Texas about one-half. There is plenty of idle labor to pick all the cotton here. False reports and wilful misrepresentation has been made in the past to bring workers from the outside in order to beat down wages. Workers coming in will have to depend on uncertain relief in order to live. Do not believe reports of good crops in this section of Texas.—J. A. Freeland, Secretary Local 182.

### POST TEXAS

Enclose copy of Dallas News giving crop report for Texas, you will see that cotton will be conspicuous by its lacking. Thirty days ago we had every prospect for a bale to acre crop, now we will be fortunate to get a bale to six acres.—Fred Mathews, Secretary, Lynn County.

### MUSKOGEE, OKLA.

The situation in Oklahoma is terrible, everything burned up, the water is drying up, and our people are in one hell of a shape. Conditions are worse than Texas or Arkansas. The Union is growing fast. We are going to be in a position to take some action when they start evicting people and foreclosing mortgages. We have been able to start some government relief, delivering commodities, to tenants and sharecroppers. We forced them to set a higher wage scale for farm laborer. The Drouth Relief Agency is putting out leaflets telling the people where our locals are organized that the government intends doing something. We are also making demands for relief. Odus L. Sweeden Oklahoma State Secretary.—Forrest City, Ark.

Crops have been hit hard by the drouth, in the bottoms they are at least a third short. In the hills cotton has lost one-half or more.—L. N. Sybert, County Organizer.

### TRUMAN, ARK.

Cotton isn't as good as it appeared to be sometime ago. Prices for cotton picking are from 40c per hundred pounds on the so-called government farms to \$1.00 per hundred on others. We need some strike leaflets scattered around here.—J. J. Lynn, County Secretary.

### MEMPHIS COTTON MARKET

1-inch middling, 12.95; basis 80 pts. on.

1 1/32-inch middling 13.10; basis 95 pts. on.

1 1/16-inch middling 13.40@13.50; basis 125-135 pts. on.

1 1/4-inch middling 14.15@14.40; basis 200-225 pts. on.



"The Voice of The Disinherited"

## The Sharecroppers' Voice

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### A POLITICAL GESTURE

After two years of bitter opposition to the organization of sharecroppers and other farm labor in Arkansas, Governor J. Marion Futrell piously announced early in August that he intended to devote the remaining days of his term in office seeking a solution to the problems of the sharecroppers.

The first step will be the calling of a preliminary commission together, and later a south-wide conference, to conduct an inquiry into the tenant problem. In his first statement the Governor stated he was going to give representation to sharecroppers on his commission.

Officials of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union called his bluff by formally requesting the appointment of union representatives on the commission. In a letter to President Butler, the Governor flatly refused to allow representation to sharecroppers and other farm labor.

On August 26th the list of people appointed to the commission was released. Five planters, seven lawyers and twenty-six other political friends of the Governor were named. **NO SHARECROPPERS WERE INCLUDED.** One person who was formerly connected with the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union was asked to serve on the board. C. T. Carpenter, former Union attorney, whose home was raided by night riders in 1935 as a result of his handling a number of cases for the Union, in no sense represents the Union on this commission.

The first meeting of this group is scheduled to be held in Hot Springs, Arkansas, Health Resort, September 21st, the same day that the Federal Grand Jury convenes in Little Rock to investigate violation of the law in Eastern Arkansas Counties by planters.

Union officials challenged the sincerity of the Governor's desire to aid sharecroppers from the first announcement. All intelligent observers must see that this belated move on the part of the Governor of Arkansas is merely a political gesture in an election year and is being forced by higher-ups.

Union leaders have met with no response to their challenge to the Governor to demonstrate his sincerity by acting on the following issues:

1. Force local officers to either produce Frank Weems, Union man reported beaten to death on the picket line near Earle, or admit that the planters murdered him.
2. Bring to justice those persons guilty of flogging Willie Sue Blagden, Rev. Claude Williams, J. M. Reese, Eliza Nolden and numerous other.
3. Protect organizers and leaders of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union in their right to spread the Union without constant interference by planters and officials.
4. Restore law and order in Eastern Arkansas counties.

### ORGANIZING THE YOUTH

The union members of Poinsett County are making sure that the union will last beyond their time.

This has become clear in the announcement of a most important happening: A charter has been granted to a Young Workers Local No. 1 near Truman. Young boys and girls from 14 to 18 years of age make up the members, and they will soon learn from their own experience just what the union means to them in getting a decent living for themselves and their brothers and sisters. They pay one half of the regular dues stamps.

We believe that the worst mistake that the Southern Tenant Farmers Union could make is to keep away from the young folks. Too often we think of the union as a "grown man's job," forgetting that the boys and girls of today are the ones who will have to carry out the job that we have started. They are the ones who will get the most benefits in the new world that we are building for the disinherited sharecropper.

The union will be in their hands tomorrow. Will they build it up to a powerful voice, demanding and receiving justice for the poor and the landless? Or will they let it fade and die—just because WE did not take them into union work?

Our song says that we are like a "tree standing by the water," but remember that a tree is only as strong as its young branches. If the union is to grow, we have got to start many more branches like Trumann.

### THIS COCK-EYED WORLD

By ADAM COALDIGGER,

In The American Guardian, August 22, 1936

This is truly the land of boundless opportunity. Just when it looked like our farmers were going to the dogs, along comes that blessed drouth and raises farm prices to the 1926 level, which has been the dream of the Triple-A. Of course all farmers don't benefit from the blessed drouth. Those who have nothing to sell claim the drouth didn't help them at all, while the farmers who must buy food, feed and fodder even claim that high farm prices are hurting them. Can you beat it?

On the whole, however, the drouth was a good thing. According to government reports, it increased the total farm income for the first six months of 1936 fifty per cent over the corresponding period of another period. The trouble with the drouth like with most good things is that it doesn't go far enough. It cut the wheat crop in half, cut the corn crop to nothing and did a first class job eliminating pastures, all of which helped animal husbandry, but it scarcely touched cotton.

In Oklahoma, western Arkansas and northwestern Texas the cotton crop has been satisfactorily reduced. But in the other sections there is serious danger of a bumper cotton crop. The same hot weather that shriveled cotton in parts of the southwest also and unfortunately put the kibosh on the boll weevil, which is the most effective cotton limitation agency known to science. There is still a chance for the army worm to get in its deadly blessing. But unless this beneficial pest shows up in the next week or two, the cotton country will be cursed with another bumper crop. It's too bad, too, for if the destruction of half of the farm crops raised farm income 50%, the destruction of all crops certainly would have boosted farm income 100%.

What this great and intelligent nation needs is national planning. A government commission should be created for the breeding and domestication of corn borers, chinch bugs, hessian flies, boll weevils, army worms and cattle ticks. Then whenever a locality is menaced by over-bountifulness, these critters could be turned loose on it. As yet, no method has been found for bottling hurricanes, hailstorms, cloud-bursts and burning winds, so that whenever a certain section of the country is endangered by an over-production of good things to eat and wear, we could let them escape to where they could do the most good.

There is another great idea I have in my head. According to statistics, there are only six million farmers in this country confronted by eleven million unemployed. What the farmers need is less farm products and higher prices. What the unemployed need is work at good wages. Well then, why not let the farmers raise all they can raise, then give the unemployed jobs destroying it at union wages. In this way the farmers get top prices for whatever is left and the unemployed earn enough to pay the price.

### WASHINGTON INVESTIGATES

At the instruction of the United States Attorney General, the Federal Grand Jury in Little Rock is to "Investigate" violations of Federal law in Eastern Arkansas. An outside prosecutor who is supposed to have no connections with the planter ring and bourbon politicians is being sent down to handle the investigation.

To all appearances the United States Government is going to take some action in behalf of the disinherited and exploited members of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union.

It has been pointed out that this investigation has political implications. Senator Joe T. Robinson, the administration's "Man Friday," has just been re-elected to serve another six years. Arkansas is safe for the Democratic party, but this is not so of other states having a large labor vote. Many of the Labor Unions are pledged to support Roosevelt in 1936.

The eyes of organized labor are on Eastern Arkansas, as was demonstrated by the support and solidarity shown the striking members of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Labor knows that the workers in the cotton fields of Eastern Arkansas have been constantly denied their rights as American citizens because they dared organize a Union.

Members of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union welcome this Federal Grand Jury investigation if it is on the level. We are reserving our judgment, and we warn the politicians, "Don't attempt to make political capital out of human misery." A coat of whitewash applied this time and every working man in American shall know it, and know the reason why.

### JOIN THE UNION!

SOUTHERN TENANT FARMERS' UNION.

Box 5215, Memphis, Tenn.

Please tell me how I can join the Union.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

### LABOR PROBLEMS NO. 1

Why We Have Labor Movements

Under present conditions with industry operated on a large scale, and land being worked by non-owners in tracts of hundreds and even thousands of acres, farm workers as well as industrial workers are helpless in dealing with an employer. Most of us whether we are sharecroppers, tenants or farm laborers working for wages, own nothing but our labor power. Such workers are powerless and are forced to accept whatever conditions or wages are offered us. Wages and terms of contracts may be lowered at the owners' will, especially since there are millions of unemployed people to take our places. The result is to drive down further the already too low standards of living. The owner of the land or industry may select his workers from the many who roam the streets and highways searching for a job, and he can force them to accept whatever conditions or wages he may offer.

Long experience has taught workers in industry that only by combining their strength into unions can they meet their employers on more equal terms. Farm workers, sharecroppers and tenants are just beginning to learn this. Only thru organization of unions can they raise wages, shorten hours and have some measure of control over conditions under which they labor. Labor unions are therefore a necessity under conditions we face today. They are the agencies by which workers in industry or agriculture can protect themselves against the strong and powerful owners. A few workers become independent business men or professional workers, a few sharecroppers, tenants and farm laborers also become landowners. The numbers in both cases are growing smaller each year. The means of acquiring land and becoming independent farmers are closing to all. In fact the small owner with a burden of debt on his 40 acres and mule is in most cases as bad off as the landless worker, he cannot expect to meet competition with the large scale farm operator. It is only a matter of time until such small owners that are left join the ranks of the landless. Therefore most of us, under the present order of things, are doomed to spend our lives where we are today, toiling in the fields day in and day out. Each worker who belongs to the union helps himself and all others of his class; each one who fails to join injures not only himself but helps to reduce the living standards of all workers.

Since the overwhelming majority of people work for a living, the standard of living thruout America, and indeed thruout the world, is largely determined by the strength of our labor organizations. From this point of view, labor unions are more than organizations set up by workers to protect the interests of the group to which they belong. They are the agencies striving for a fuller and richer life for all of the people. Labor unions are the means thru which the ideal of democracy in every-day life are expressed; they are the organs for securing social justice, they are the agencies of civilization.

JOIN THE SOUTHERN  
TENANT FARMERS' UNION